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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001302

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON
NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: RIZEIGAT, MISSEIRIYA TRIBAL FIGHTING IN SOUTH DARFUR
SUBSIDES, BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN

11. (SBU) Summary: Fighting that began on August 20 between Misseriya and Rizeigat herders resulted in the deaths of more than 60 people in South Darfur. Misseriya elder Kamil Nimir downplayed the violence, characterizing it as a dispute over access to water that spiraled out of control due to the high-powered weaponry involved. However, Mohammed Issa of the Rizeigat stated that such clashes over scarce water resources have occurred in the past and will continue unless a border is delineated between Misseriya and Rizeigat areas and secured by GOS military forces. Although both report that the situation is now calm following the intervention by the GoS and tribal leaders, questions remain over the underlying causes. End Summary.

12. (U) According to press reports, a clash between Arab Misseriya and Rizeigat tribesmen over access to water in South Darfur, left 67 dead. Both the Misseriya and the Rizeigat are semi-nomadic herdsman who dwell in Darfur and Southern Kordofan, and migrate south with their cattle to graze during the summer rainy season. A local-USAID advisor reported that on August 20 a group of Rezeigat killed one Misseriya herder, whose companions retaliated by killing several Rezeigat. Fighting escalated from there. According to UNAMID on August 26, the latest GoS reports confirm that the incident took place at Umm-Hazura, about 36 km east of Abu Jabura in South Darfur, near a UNAMID Military Base. 18 from the Misseriya tribe were killed and 49 from the Rizeigat.

13. (SBU) On August 25-26 Poloff spoke with Kamil Babo Nimir, a senior member of the Misseriya tribe, and Mohammed Issa, head of the Rizeigat Shura Council. Nimir expressed alarm at the media portrayal of the events as a clash between the Misseriya and Rizeigat tribes. "The Misseriya and the Rizeigat are brothers," he said, noting that the two have historically enjoyed good relations. He characterized the fighting as a clash between two isolated groups in a remote area. He stated that an initial skirmish over grazing rights between several young tribesmen spiraled out of control due to the weaponry involved and lack of government intervention, as relatives of the dead sought revenge. He claimed that the situation flamed out quickly and is now calm. Nimir expressed hope for peace and reconciliation, noting that he had just returned from a meeting in the parliament called by National Assembly speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir in which tribal elders on both sides had reaffirmed their commitment to dialogue.

14. (SBU) According to Mohamed Issa of the Rizeigat Shura Council, however, the fighting near Abu Jabura was only the latest manifestation of the conflict between the Misseriya and Rizeigat over scarce water resources in the region. Such clashes over have happened in the past, he said, and would continue to happen if there is no delineation of borders between Rizeigat and Misseriya areas. "I think it is very important to renew the borders" and create a buffer zone between the two tribes, he said. He stated that the border must be secured by GOS forces if future clashes are to be

avoided. He noted that with 50 people killed it was "very early -- and difficult -- to speak about reconciliation."

15. (SBU) National Assembly Spokesperson Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir in a statement blamed "unnamed foreign elements" for instigating trouble between the Rizeigat and Misseriya tribes, and confirmed the GoS' efforts to reconcile the tribes in coordination with the states of Southern Kordofan and South Darfur, according to press reports. He added that a reconciliation conference will convene next month. The USAID advisor reports that the conference, consisting of ten Misseriya representatives, ten Rizeigat, and six from the South Kordofan state government, will meet September 5.

6 (SBU) Comment: Many questions remain in the wake of last week's fighting. While inter-tribal conflict is frequent and bloody across Sudan (at the same time as the Misseriya-Rizeigat battle, 13 died and 32 were wounded in a cattle raid in Jonglei state in south Sudan), the toll in this dispute was particularly high. It also seems strange that the two groups clashed over water in the rainy season, when water is relatively plentiful. The Misseriya and the Rizeigat share a common way of life and are traditional allies (Rizeigat volunteers rode to assist the Misseriya during the May fighting in Abyei). Both have served in GoS' infamous Popular Defense Force militias, but in recent years have turned away from the NCP in large numbers and have permitted Darfurian rebels to pass through or operate in their territory. Drawing a boundary to be policed by the GoS ought to be an anathema for the two nomadic groups. The conflict may have begun as two marginalized groups driven to compete over Sudan's stressed resource base, but the push to create formal borders with the GoS in between smacks of Khartoum's effort to manipulate the situation to its advantage through "divide and rule."

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